

Finally the Book of Revelation Made *Easy*

It is unfortunate that many believers see the book of Revelation as a “scary” book or a book “too hard to understand”. The third verse of this book has a promised blessing... *“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”*

The Lord would not offer a blessing and then turn it into confusion! So why is this book so difficult to so many? Because the average modern day believer does not have a firm understanding of the Old Testament. The book of Revelation is explained in the pages of the Old Testament. The purpose of this book is to help the reader journey through the Old Testament into clarity of Revelation.

The book of Revelation is full of Old Testament passages.

When the Old Testament is studied, to the depth and level which it should be, the New Testament comes alive with clarity and understanding.

If you heard me speaking to a friend and you heard me say, “We are going to celebrate like it is the 4th of July”. What would you think? When you hear that phrase, what mental pictures come to your mind?

- Fireworks?
- BBQ?
- Summertime?

I did not mention any of those words - fireworks, BBQ or summertime; I just said July 4th. Obviously one’s mind in America could easily automatically go to memories of the celebration that takes place on the 4th of July. There’s an association there and that association is key. It would be easy to incorporate the understanding of fireworks and BBQ into the idea of celebrating the 4th of July. However, if we lived in China or some other foreign country and you overheard me use that same phrase, what mental picture would a citizen of China have if he had never been to America? Maybe none because there would be no understanding of the event or meaning. This is where many modern day believers are when it comes to understanding the depth and meaning of the Old Testament. It’s as if one is speaking a foreign language. One may understand a story or two, or may have an understanding of a book or two, but not many have the clarity needed to fully understand the meaning and purpose of the Old Testament language used in the New Testament, especially the last book of the Bible.

The goal in any of my teaching is to help people understand AND apply God’s Word. Not just read it but understand it. I do not believe one can successfully apply God’s Word unless they understand it in proper CONTEXT. When reading this book pay close attention to the phrase The **Old Testament significance** of... This will help point you to the understanding of the passage. Enjoy the journey!

The Dating and History of Revelation

The text clearly tells us that Revelation was written on the island of Patmos. John had been sent to this rocky and barren island, which is now present day Turkey, by the Roman Emperor Domitian whose reign was from 81 –96 A.D. Domitian’s reign is not the only clue we have for the dating of this book. Chapters 2 and 3 speak of the spiritual decline of the seven churches in Asia Minor. Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 and 2 Timothy tells us these churches were spiritually healthy as of the mid-sixties, when Paul last ministered there. This spiritual decline is something that could easily have happened forty years from their beginning. More definite than that, is that in chapter 3 verse 17, the church in Laodicea is described as “rich, wealthy and in need of nothing”. That city was completely destroyed by an earthquake in 60-61 A.D. It would have taken some time for this church to regain what was destroyed. Another factor in the dating of this book is that it is understood that John did not leave Jerusalem until the time of Nero’s persecution of Christians (66-70 A.D.) He would have had to have time to arrive in Asia Minor and begin his ministry, reaching a point where he would have been considered a threat to the Romans, a threat worthy of exile. Because of all this most believe Revelation was written around 95 A.D.

Domitian was threatened by John’s ministry and saw him as a dangerous threat. During his exile John was separated from his Christian brothers and sisters. Left alone to worship, it was then that the risen Jesus appeared to him in an amazing vision.

After his exile John returned to Ephesus, where he had been ministering before his exile. Paul founded the Ephesian church on his second missionary journey. When Paul left for Jerusalem, Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:19-21, 24-26) became leaders of the Ephesian church.

The Audience and Purpose

Revelation is written for all generations however it is specifically addressed to seven churches located just 30-50 miles apart from each other. These cities are now located in what is modern southwestern Turkey. Each city is addressed in a clockwise direction starting with Ephesus going north to Smyrna and Pergamum then East to Thyatira then south to Sardis, southeast to Philadelphia and Laodicea and then back west to Ephesus.

Other than the prophetic aspect of Revelation, a major theme or ***purpose of this book is to confirm the full identity of Jesus Christ*** and to offer hope and warning to born again believers. We are warned that there will be a beast who will demand worship (13:1-8). This would not have been too far-fetched for the original audience to comprehend. For years Roman Emperors expected to be worshipped. It was with the reign of Domitian that refusing to worship the Roman Emperor became a punishable offense through the entire empire.

Born again believers are also warned about complacency towards the things of God. They are warned about false teaching, falling to immorality, divisions within the church, having a lack of love for God and others. Revelation could be considered a “wake-up” call to the church.

The Question of Authorship

Two questions that must be answered...

1. DID the Apostle John write the letter of Revelation?
2. WAS he really exiled to the island of Patmos?

The early church fathers (100-300 AD) all confirmed that John was the author of Revelation

1. Justin Martyr
2. Irenaeus – Said that John lived in Ephesus after returning from Patmos (until the reign of Trajan)
3. Tertullian
4. Hippolytus
5. Origen
6. Clement of Alexandria – confirms John returned from the island of Patmos
7. Eusebius – confirms John was exiled
8. Polycarp (was discipled by John)

Are these real events?

2 Peter 1:19-21

“We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

This book is an actual record of things to come

1. Tribulation is chapters 4-11
2. Great Tribulation is chapters 12-19

Chapters 1-3	Church age	Duration unknown
Chapters 4-19	Judgment	Seven Years
Chapter 20	Kingdom age	One thousand years
Chapters 21-22	Eternal age	Eternal

Symbolism

Revelation is a book of symbols. It uses more symbols than any other book in the New Testament. It is similar to such Old Testament books like Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah. However, this is a first-century book written to a first-century audience who would have easily understood the symbols used. The question modern day Christians have to ask is “what was God saying to this first-century audience?” Was what He was saying to them as true today for us as it was then for them? We just have the job of understanding how they understood John’s words.

What were (are) the symbols God used to proclaim His word? Symbols can often be explained by their usage elsewhere in the Bible. For example:

- The seven stars represent seven angels (1:16, 20)
- The seven lampstands represent the seven churches (1:13, 20)
- The hidden manna is Christ in His glory (Ex. 1:20)
- The morning star refers to Christ (2 Peter 1:19)
- The key of David represents the power to open and close doors (Isaiah 22:22)
- The living creatures represent the attributes of God (4:7)
- The four horses and their riders represent successive events in the tribulation (6:1)
- The fallen star represents satan (Isa 14, Ezek. 28)
- The stars of heaven refers to fallen angels (12:4, 9)
- The woman and child represent Israel and Christ (12:1-2; 5-6)
- The beast out of the sea is the future world ruler (13:1-10).
- The beast out of the earth is the false prophet (13:11-17; 19:20)
- The harlot is Babylon (17:1)
- Fine lines is the righteous deeds of the saints (19:8)

As I already stated, one could safely say Revelation may be impossible to understand without the Old Testament. Revelation is a book about the future and about the present. It offers hope for the future by proclaiming Christ's total triumph over evil and it gives present day guidelines as to how we should live for Christ today.

Final Thoughts

Through the ages, many have disagreed over several aspects of this book. Most of that disagreement revolves around the timing of certain events. Such as the timing of:

- The rapture of the church
- The millennial reign of Christ
- When Christ will return

As we edge closer to the "end times", I see the physical earthly audience in the last days being mostly Jewish. I believe in a pre-millennium rapture of the church meaning that during the seven year Tribulation period, Jesus, the Bridegroom, will take His bride, the church, to heaven for a seven year long wedding feast. I believe the fulfillment of Romans (9-11) will begin as the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, the two witnesses and the multitude of post-rapture believers share the truth of Jesus. Yes, during that time some Gentiles will become believers but I believe the Lord's main focus will be back on Israel.

As you read this book you will notice I do not capitalize satan, this is on purpose. Yes, I realize it's a title and should be capitalized however I would rather have a grammar error than pay any respect to that enemy!

Revelation Chapter One

“The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. ³ *Blessed is the one who reads* aloud the words of this prophecy, and *blessed are those who hear* it and *take to heart what is written* in it, because the time is near.

⁴ John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. ⁷“Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be! Amen. ⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

John’s Vision of Christ

⁹ I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰ On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, ¹¹ which said:

“Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.” ¹² I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.

¹⁴ The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.

¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.

¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. ¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. ¹⁹ “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.

²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”

Revelation 1:1 Daniel 2:27-28, 12:4

Revelation 1:4 Exodus 3:14, Numbers 6:22-27, Isaiah 11:2

Revelation 1:5-6 Psalm 89:27, Exodus 19:5-6

Revelation 1:7 Daniel 7:13-14, Zechariah 12:10, Isaiah 4:5

Revelation 1:8 Genesis 17:1, 28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3; Isaiah 41

Revelation 1:10 Ezekiel 2:2, Exodus 19:16

Revelation 1:12-13 ... Exodus 25:31-40, Zechariah 4:2, Daniel 7:13

Revelation 1:13 Exodus 28:2-5, Leviticus 8:7

Revelation 1:14 Daniel 7:9, 10:4-12

Revelation 1:15-16 ... Isaiah 17:12-13, Exodus 38:29-30, Numbers 6:25

Revelation 1:17 Isaiah 6:4-8; 41:4, Daniel 10

Revelation 1:18 Isaiah 22:22

God speaking to His people is a significant aspect of the Old Testament. In the Garden of Eden, God spoke personally with Adam. Then sin entered the world and God used other methods to communicate. The most common method, though not the only one, was God sending His prophets to speak to His people. God Himself appeared to His people. “By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night”, **Exodus 12:21**. God spoke to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. When John opens his book by announcing that this is a revelation, a message from Jesus the Christ, one must understand how bold of a statement this is. To say that God is speaking is quite a statement! The first five words of Revelation is much like the opening of the gospel of Mathew, proclaiming Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah. Proclaiming that He (Jesus) has a message for what is about to take place. This opening line of Revelation should not be taken lightly.

Revelation 1:1

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John”

This introduction is like most introductions. It lists the name of the work, “*The revelation of Jesus Christ*” and the author John. This is “*the revelation of Jesus Christ*” WHICH God gave Him. This revelation is unique to Christ. It belongs to Him not to angels or humans. Jesus, in turn, is pleased to reveal this Revelation to His servants, such as John.

The **Old Testament significance** of receiving a revelation from the Lord goes back over 2,600 years ago to Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar who had a dream. (This was almost 700 years before John). The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) if he would be able to interpret the dream. Daniel confirms that it is not man but only God who reveals mysteries.

Daniel 2:27-28

“Daniel replied, “No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about but...there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.”

We have Daniel’s work today because Daniel sealed it, finished it and God preserved it. It is no less relevant today than it was 2,600 years ago.

Daniel 12:4

“But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”

What the prophet Daniel saw was confirmed through the apostle John. In the Tribulation period, “*Many will go here and there to increase knowledge*”, meaning people will run about seeking answers to questions about the climatic events they are living through and some will find those answers here in the book of Daniel.

Revelation 1:2

“...who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

John uses the language of a legal witness called to appear in a courtroom. John’s role is to simply testify to everything he saw. John says he is an eye-witness to this record meaning what he writes about will be real events affecting real people.

It would be right to say this revelation belongs to Jesus Christ. This is the testimony of Jesus written by His slave John and written for Jesus’ bondservants. Again, realize what a powerful statement this is. John is emphatically stating that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, our Lord and Savior. In this opening chapter John describes Jesus as “*Faithful witness*” (1:5), “*first born of the dead*” (1:5), “*Ruler of the kings of the earth*” (1:5), “*the One who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood*” (1:5), “*made us to be a kingdom and priests.*”(1:6).

In verse 8, if you have a Bible that outlines the words of Jesus in red, you’ll see that Jesus speaks and introduces Himself as the “*Alpha and Omega*” (1:8).

Revelation 1:3

“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”

Jesus grants John four visions (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10) that he was instructed to record and send to the persecuted Christians of Asia. John was certainly aware of the importance of this work. In verse 3, a divine blessing is promised for faithful obedience to the teaching of this book. These blessings apply to *every* generation of followers of Jesus who read and obey these words. Too many modern day believers do not read or study the book of Revelation because they feel it is too scary or too hard to understand. Think about this, why would Scripture speak clearly from Genesis to Jude and then all of a sudden become confusing? It wouldn’t and it doesn’t. ***The key to understanding this last book of the Bible is to understand the rest of the Bible.*** For every forty verses in the book of Revelation approximately twenty-seven of those forty verses come directly from the Old Testament. To put it another way, about sixty-eight percent of Revelation is directly related to the Old Testament. So in order to understand the last book of the Bible one must have a good grip on the rest of the Bible. Once the Old Testament passage is recognized, the next task is to understand that Old Testament reference in proper context. Meaning what is the purpose of the Old Testament text? When you understand that, the book of Revelation opens up and becomes somewhat easy to understand. God would not offer a promise of blessing and then make that blessing impossible to understand.

I believe and teach the pre-tribulation view meaning that I believe the church is raptured out before the Tribulation period begins. I also believe that Scripture will be fulfilled as God originally planned. What do I mean by that? I believe the main audience of Revelation will be Jewish. Will there still be Gentiles (non-Jews) in that day? Of course there will be. However I believe Romans 11 will be fulfilled in that Israel will once again become the centerpiece of the world. I believe that when God made His covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12) the purpose of that covenant was that through Abraham, eventually the entire world would be blessed.

Genesis 12:2-3

*"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and **all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**"*

Throughout its history, when was Israel a blessing to the entire world? It is yet to happen. However, God's plan will be fulfilled.

Romans 11:25-26

*"I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: **Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in,**²⁶ and in this way **all Israel will be saved.**"*

To the Jewish mind that reads the words of Revelation, possibly for the first time, the truth is going to be extremely clear because they will have a firm understanding of Old Testament passages and their meaning. Some will argue, how can the church be removed from the greatest time of revival in world history? The answer is simple. God still has Israel. In the tribulation period, who will be the voice of truth and evangelism? The 144,000 who are sealed. Who are they? They are Jews from the twelve tribes of Israel. There will be the two Jewish witnesses who will have supernatural powers and there will be the multitude that give their lives as martyrs for their faith during the time of the Tribulation (This will be explained more with the fifth seal). Please notice after chapter 3, the "church" is not mentioned. Why? Because during the earthly Tribulation the church (the bride) will be in heaven with the Groom (Jesus) celebrating a wedding feast.

Throughout Scripture it has been God's character to remove His righteous before judgment. Noah and his family were saved from worldwide judgment (the flood). Lot and his family were removed before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Noah's grandfather, Methuselah, a righteous man and the oldest living human, died the same year as the flood (traditionally) a week before the judgment of the flood (Genesis 5:27). His son, Enoch, who Scripture said "*walked with God*", was taken to heaven without dying at age 365. The interesting thing about Methuselah is what his names means. Methuselah means "*when he dies, judgment.*"

Isaiah 57:1 says

*"The righteous perish, and no one takes it to heart; the devout are taken away, and no one understands that **the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil.**"*

Scripture in the first century was usually read (*one who reads*) to many listeners (*those who hear*). The blessing comes to those who read, hear and take to heart. To receive the promised blessing one must do all three, not two out of three.

The word Revelation in Greek is *apocalypis*, where we get our word apocalypse. Several times in this book, such as here and in chapter 22, it is called a "*prophecy*" which is another way of saying this is a foretelling of God's plan or direction.

Greeting and Doxology - Revelation 1:4-8

Revelation 1:4

*“John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia: **Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne,”***

Why are there “seven” selected churches? Throughout Scripture seven is seen as God’s number for completion. How many times did Israel march around Jericho? (Joshua 6:15) How many times was Naaman dipped in the Jordan River? (2 Kings 5:14) How many years of plenty and years of want were there for Joseph? (Genesis 41) How many years were Nebuchadnezzar insane? (Daniel 4:32) How many years did Jacob work to marry Rachel? (Genesis 29:20) How many days of creation were there? (Genesis 1)

The book of Revelation begins and ends with grace (1:4; 22:21) as do Paul’s letters. The greeting of peace (*Shalom*) is from the Old Testament (**Numbers 6:22-27**). The **Old Testament significance** of grace and peace is found in the book of Numbers.

Numbers 6:22-27

*“²² The LORD said to Moses, ²³ “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: ²⁴ ‘The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and **give you peace.**” ²⁷ “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”*

The **Old Testament significance** of the description of this revelation being from the “*One who is and was*” will directly take the listener back to Moses and the burning bush in Exodus. God is the God of the past, present and future.

Exodus 3:14

“God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

The term “*seven spirits*” is found only in Revelation. It is John’s way of describing the Holy Spirit. He also uses this term in 3:1; 4:5; and 5:6.

John’s use of this term “*seven spirits*” comes from **Isaiah 11:2**, which describes the sevenfold ministry of the Holy Spirit (1) *The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him* (2) *the Spirit of wisdom* (3) *and of understanding* (discernment), (4) *the Spirit of counsel and of* (5) *power, (6) the Spirit of knowledge and of* (7) *the fear of the LORD.*”

Revelation 1:5-6

*“...and from Jesus Christ, who is **the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.** To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins **by his blood,** and has **made us to be a kingdom and***

priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen.”

Jesus is described in three ways. He is the “*faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead* (the first to resurrect), *and the ruler of the kings of the earth* (in contrast to the Roman emperors).”

This was also stated in ***Psalm 89:27***

“*And I will appoint him to be my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth.*”

Psalm 89 is a Psalm of Covenant. It affirms God’s faithfulness in His promise to the house of David.

John then bursts into a hymn of praise, a doxology to Jesus. Glory and power are attributed to both God the Father and to Jesus the Son. John is praising Jesus for

- loving us
- freeing us from our sins
- making us to be a kingdom and priests.

Like the Passover lamb of the Old Testament, Jesus was slain. Israel was set free by the blood of the Passover lamb and here John reminds his readers that we are set free from the bondage of sin because of the blood of the lamb! This verse and 7:14 are the only texts in Revelation where blood refers to the death of Jesus.

An **important Old Testament designation** for the Israelites after their exodus from Egypt was “*kingdom and priests*” (**Exodus 19:6**). This designation is now transferred over to believers. We, as priests, are to serve God the Father. The purpose of the priest was to be someone who would go before God on behalf of people. We are still called to do this, not with animal sacrifice, but with prayers. Believers are to go before the throne of God interceding for the lost. How often do you, as a “sanctified” believer, (set-apart for God’s use) go before Him on behalf of others? Read the words from Exodus that Moses received on Mt Sinai. Notice the blessing is conditional.

Exodus 19:5-6

“⁵ Now ***if you obey me fully and keep my covenant***, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶ ***you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.***’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

Revelation 1:7

“*Look, he is coming with the clouds,*” and “*every eye will see him, even those who pierced him*”; *and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be! Amen.*”

This is the first of two commands. John is told to LOOK. In verse 11 he will be told to WRITE. John says “*Look...He is coming*” which makes Jesus’ return both personal and physical. The “purpose statement” of Revelation is also its first prophecy. This prophecy emphasizes the

contrast between Jesus' first and second coming. The **Old Testament significance** is based on Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10.

Daniel chapter 7 takes place in the first year of King Belshazzar. This would have been about nine years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel received a vision from God. The vision was of four beasts (vs 4-7). The animals of Daniel's vision, the lion, bear and leopard were all well-known animals in the Middle East. These animals that Daniel sees are nations of the world under the control of Satan. If Daniel's vision was a play, chapter 7 would be a major scene change, switching from the four beasts to the "Ancient of Days", the foretelling of Jesus' coming and His defeat of the world's power.

Daniel 7:13-14

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

The phrase "like a son of man" was the phrase Nebuchadnezzar used in describing the 4th person in the fiery furnace. It is also a phrase Jesus used to describe Himself.

The **Old Testament significance** of the image of clouds takes us back to Mt Sinai...

Exodus 16:10

"While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud."

... and forward to Mt Zion.

Matthew 24:30

"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."

Jesus used this term, "Son of Man"

- When talking with His disciples
- When revealing the coming events of Passion Week
- At His trial before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:61-62)

Clouds are a common picture in Scripture

- The resurrected Jesus returned to heaven in a cloud (Acts 1:9)
- Angels promised He would return in the same manner (Acts 1:11)
- Clouds refer Bible readers to God's revelation (Exodus 13:1; 1 Kings 8; Isaiah 19; Jeremiah 4; Ezekiel 10)

Isaiah 4:5

*“Then the LORD will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a **cloud of smoke by day** and a glow of **flaming fire by night**; over everything the glory will be a canopy.”*

Jesus’ second coming will be drastically different than His first. In His second coming, every eye will see Him. His ultimate victory will be open for all to see. This is in contrast to His first coming when hardly anyone noticed His earthly birth.

Those who have rejected Christ in every age, beginning with those who pierced Him, will realize their terrible error. He will become their judge and they will mourn because they will realize all is lost and He is about to judge them.

The **Old Testament significance** is explained in vivid detail by the post-exile prophet Zechariah.

Zechariah 12:10

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.”

The day will come when Israel will receive spiritual deliverance. By God’s grace the Jewish people will finally recognize their Messiah as Lord and Savior! What a glorious day that will be! When the “*pouring out of the Spirit*” takes place, they are going to recognize Christ as Savior. Israel will know Him when the veil is lifted from their eyes, as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:13.

Notice there are two groups mentioned in Revelation 1:7. “*Those who pierced him*” and “*all peoples on earth*.” Those who pierced Him are the unbelieving Jews and the people of the earth are the unbelieving Gentiles (non-Jews). Why do I say they are non-believers? Because this is in the Tribulation period and the believers, the church, have been removed. To begin the Tribulation period, all that is left are non-believers.

“*The one they have pierced*”, this is not some unknown martyr that is being described – it is the coming of the Messiah Himself. The apostle John quotes verse 10 from his own gospel when he is describing the piercing of and death of Jesus by Roman soldiers.

John 19:37

“as another scripture says, “They will look on the one they have pierced.”

At His first advent (coming) Messiah was pierced for the sins of the world. At His second advent (coming) Israel will recognize Jesus as their promised Messiah and they will place their faith in Him (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32; Romans 11:25-27; Matthew 23:39).

Jeremiah 31:31-34

“The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their

forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.³³ "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.³⁴ No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Matthew 23:39

"For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'"

Israel's sincerity is demonstrated by deep, heartfelt repentance. "They will mourn", meaning wail or lament with loud cries, over their sinful rejection of the Messiah as one who mourns for an only child.

The depth of this mourning will take people back to Herod and the time Jesus was a baby Matthew 2:16-18 which quotes from Jeremiah 31:15, The **Old Testament significance** of the passage in Jeremiah speaks to the deep pain a mother will have for her children killed when Babylon invades Israel.

Jeremiah 31:15

"This is what the LORD says: "A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

Jeremiah 31 references the pain of Jacob when he is told Joseph was dead.

Genesis 37:34-35

"Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days.³⁵ All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave." So his father wept for him."

Revelation 1:8

*"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says **the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."***

If you have a Bible that has red letters you'll notice that Jesus introduces Himself here. Why? Because it is HIS revelation.

John reminds his readers the real power rests in God. He is the Alpha and the Omega, (the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet) the beginning and the end. Jesus was before all things and He will remain after all things. No one from the beginning of time to the end of time has even been in control *except* the Lord.

His power is seen in the title “*Almighty*”. The **Old Testament significance** of this statement goes all the way back to Genesis where the phrase “*The Lord of Shaddai*” is used (**Genesis 17:1, 28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3**) which means the “*Lord of Hosts*”, or the “*Lord Almighty*”.

1 and 2 Samuel use the term “*The Lord Almighty*” (1 Samuel 1:3, 1:11, 4:4, 15:2, 17:45; 2 Samuel 5:10, 6:2, 6:18, 7:26) The term is also found in the **Psalms** 24:10, 46:7, 46:11, 48:8). The three post-exile prophets **Haggai, Zechariah** and **Malachi** all use the phrase “*The Lord Almighty*”. **Isaiah** uses similar language in chapters 41, 44 and 48 when he says “*the first and the last*”.

One Like A Son of Man – Revelation 1:9-20

This is vision number one received while on the island of Patmos. Patmos was the Alcatraz of the Roman Empire. It was a prison without walls. Those sent there were forced into hard labor in the marble quarry. John was exiled there because of his faith.

Revelation 1:9

“I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”

How John identifies with his audience becomes part of his writing style. He does not try to write as if he were superior to them, thus the wording “*your brother and companion*”. Remember John would have been well known to the churches he is addressing. It would have been easy to use that prestige.

Nugget: The Island of Patmos.

This small island, about ten miles long and six miles wide, is located in the Aegean Sea southwest of Ephesus. This island was rocky and had hard terrain. It is widely believed (by early church fathers such as Irenaeus and Clement) that John was exiled to this remote island by the emperor Domitian. Domitian was publicly opposed to Christianity and waged a public campaign against Christianity. He called himself ‘savior’ and ‘lord’ and expected worship from Roman citizens. He hated Christians and their use of these terms ‘Savior’ and ‘Lord’ for someone other than himself. Despite Domitian’s efforts he could not stop the Spirit of God.

Many of God’s servants served while under persecution. Moses wrote the Pentateuch in the wilderness. David wrote many of the Psalms while on the run from Saul. Isaiah lived in difficult times. Ezekiel wrote while in exile. Jeremiah was persecuted. Paul was imprisoned.

Revelation 1:10

*“On the Lord’s Day **I was in the Spirit**, and I heard behind me **a loud voice like a trumpet**,”*

In John’s day the term “*The Lord’s Day*” was the Christian way of referring to the first day of the week, the day in honor of Christ’s resurrection, which is our Sunday. Since His resurrection, believers have met for worship on this day. As a footnote, setting aside the first day of the week

to worship the Lord would have been in direct contrast to the setting aside the first day of the month to worship the Roman Emperor, which was known as “Emperor Day”.

Acts 20:7

*“**On the first day of the week** we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.”*

1 Corinthians 16:2

*“**On the first day of every week**, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.”*

I can picture John having his own private worship service when something amazing happens. As with **Ezekiel (2:2)** the phrase “*In the Spirit*” appears here and in 4:2, 17:3, and 21:10. Each time it simply means “*I had a vision inspired by the Spirit of God*”. This is the first of four visions.

On Mt. Sinai, Moses heard “*a very loud trumpet blast*” (Exodus 19:16). John’s vision begins not with a sight but with a sound, “*a loud voice like a trumpet*”. John uses the words “like” and “as” as a comparison. *This is the voice of the risen Christ.*

Revelation 1:11

“...which said: “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”

The voice, Jesus, **commands** John to write on a scroll. This is the second command given to John. In verse 7 he was told to LOOK, now he is told to WRITE.

With these two commands do you believe Jesus **WANTS** us to UNDERSTAND this book?

A scroll is a firm piece of paper made from the papyrus plant. Strips were glued together to form a scroll. The handwriting was written in columns a few inches wide. This scroll would have been written in Greek (left-to-right).

This introduction gives some basic geographical information. The seven cities mentioned here would have been cities that Paul had traveled to and had established churches in. The seven churches are each to receive this scroll and it was to be read aloud to all of their congregations. Remember the promised blessing in verse 3 to those who read and hear these words.

Revelation 1:12

*“I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw **seven golden lampstands...**”*

One has to wonder what was going through John’s mind. He was a disciple. He had “heard” Jesus’ voice many times. But not like this! Not coming from heaven in all His glory.

The seven golden lampstands were a seven-branched candelabrum just like the one placed in the Israelite tabernacle (Ex. 25:36-40).

Exodus 25:31-40

³¹ "**Make a lampstand of pure gold** and hammer it out, base and shaft; its flowerlike cups, buds and blossoms shall be of one piece with it. ³² Six branches are to extend from the sides of the lampstand—three on one side and three on the other. ³³ Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on one branch, three on the next branch, and the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand. ³⁴ And on the lampstand there are to be four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms. ³⁵ One bud shall be under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand, a second bud under the second pair, and a third bud under the third pair—six branches in all. ³⁶ The buds and branches shall all be of one piece with the lampstand, hammered out of pure gold. ³⁷ "**Then make its seven lamps** and set them up on it so that they light the space in front of it. ³⁸ Its wick trimmers and trays are to be of pure gold. ³⁹ A talent of pure gold is to be used for the lampstand and all these accessories. ⁴⁰ See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

The lampstand in the tabernacle was handmade of one talent of pure solid gold (Exodus 25:39). A talent weighed approximately seventy pounds. Bezaleel was the skilled workman who made the lampstand for the tabernacle.

In **Zechariah 4:2** such a lampstand represents Israel. Now each lampstand represents one of the Christian churches. Just as lampstands bring physical light to the darkness, Christians should bring spiritual light to a lost world (Matthew 5:14). Lampstands don't create light, they are to make the light MORE visible. The lampstand is the instrument used for the light. The Church doesn't produce the light – but we are called to DISPLAY it.

Revelation 1:13

*"...and among the lampstands was someone "**like a son of man,**" **dressed in a robe** reaching down to his feet and with **a golden sash around his chest.**"*

Christ is seen in the midst of these lampstands or in the midst of these churches. The title "*Son of Man*" is a common title used in the Gospels (John 1:51; 3:13-14; 5:27). Its roots go back to Daniel (7:13). Neither Jesus' friends, followers nor enemies called Him this; however, He often used it as a designation for Himself. It emphasizes His humanity as well as His divinity. He is fully God and fully man. The Son of Man designation was one way of saying He was the Messiah without using the term Messiah.

John's description of Jesus fits His character. Priest and judge.

The **Old Testament significance** of the robe goes back to **Exodus 28:2** and **Leviticus 8:7** where it explains what priestly garments look like. Aaron's robe was designed for glory and beauty.